Famous Gowns of "First Ladies of The Land"

MRS TAFT'S INAUGURAL BALL GOWN

A COSTUME of the FAMOUS DOLLY MADISON

MRS. POLK DRESSED IN THIS FASHION.

THIS GOWN WORN BY HARRIET LANE JOHNSTON, NIECE OF PRESIDENT BUCHANAN

MRS TYLER, IN HER INAUGURAL GOWN

ELABORATE COSTUME of MRS U.S. GRANT

Harriet Lane, niece of President Buchanan, who married and became a Johnson, and the other is Mrs. John Tyler. The former gown is the property of Miss May S. Kennedy and the latter belongs to Mrs. Pearl Tyler Ellis.

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In Buchanan's administration Miss Lane was the most popular belle in Washington. Her violet eyes and golden hair, in addition to a wonderfully charming manner, endeared her to all those with whom she came in contact. Although a woman of practically no social experience, she assumed the responsibilities of White House hostess, and never had they been better conducted.

Mrs. Tyler's gown is the one she wore when first presented to the court of Louis Philippe. It is a beautifully embroidered creation, rather more youthful than any of the other gowns. It was particularly suited to Mrs. Polk, however, for she took up the duties of the "first lady of the land" at an extremely youthful age.

The most modern costume is that of Mrs. Taft. It is her inaugural gown, a creation of floss, silver and rhinestones, which was made for her in the Philippines. It is low cut, with short sleeves, and has a very long, full train. It was presented to the museum by Mrs. Taft to be used as a permanent exhibit.

In flat, glass cases, arranged between the cases containing the models of the first ladies, there is a miscellaneous collection of hats, umbrellas, gloves and "whatnots" that women of all generations love.

The exhibit will be a substantial addition to the National Museum collection, and it is due to the unflagging interest and energy of Mrs. James that this exhibit is possible. The government furnished some money for the search and collection of the gowns and made the models, but for the most part Mrs. James has herself borne the expense.

PLAIN BLUE SILK GOWN, EMBROIDERED IN STRAW IN NATURAL COLOR, WORN BY MARIE MONROE, YOUNGEST DAUGHTER OF PRESIDENT MONROE.

DARK RED VELVET GOWN WORN BY MRS. RUTHERFORD B. HAYES AT WHITE HOUSE FUNCTIONS.

The exhibit is about half completed. From five to eight more figures will be added, and then the nation will have gained a comparative demonstration of the change in fashions of more than a century. And those objects on exhibition will have a great historic as well as an artistic interest.

MRS. BENJAMIN HARRISON'S MAGENTA BROCADE GOWN, TRIMMED WITH GOLD EMBROIDERY.

QUAINT COSTUME OF SALMON-COLORED SILK, WITH HAND-PAINTED FLOWERS, WORN BY MARTHA WASHINGTON.

GOWN WORN BY MRS. WILLIAM McKINLEY.

Costumes of Former Mistresses of the White House Exhibited on Plaster Figures in the National Museum—Show Changing Fashions of a Century in Women's Gowns—Exhibit Still Incomplete—How and Why It Was Assembled.

IN a secluded corner of the National Museum, somewhat out of the beaten path followed by sightseeing throngs, there is an exhibition that will bring joy to the heart of every feminine visitor to the National Capital.

Here, in a dimly lighted room, made smoky by warlike relics of former glory which repose in glass cases under lock and key, on all sides, famous White House ladies of bygone generations may be viewed; and if the visitor is of the proper temperament an acquaintanceship may be cultivated that will prove an unending enjoyment.

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Just as during past administrations, when these famous women stood with ladies of their husbands' cabinets to receive royalty and lowly Americans on an almost equal footing, these women stand today. Here the "first ladies of the land" hold perpetual rule. They are not bothered by petty, trivial everyday cares. Social problems no longer interest them—they have a mission.

It is to show the changing fashions of a century in women's gowns that these women again make their bows to America. At one time each of those great dames stood before this country as a model of all that was good in womankind. Their gowns were taken as the last word in feminine dress of their respective administrations, and the spirits of the great ladies have consented to be brought back to life to appear before posterity just as they did when they stood in the blue room of the White House smilingly bowing to long lines of reception guests.

The congress of "first ladies" was inspired by the ever changing and all important problem of women's clothes problem. Here, for the first time in history, one can see at a glance the style of dress most popular at any time from the Continental Congress until the present day. Mrs. Julian James of Washington, a historian, welfare worker and social leader of society in the nation's capital, originated the idea of a period exhibit of costumes to show from comparative inspection, the changes and improvements in women's fashions.

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Mrs. James first suggested such an exhibition to the directors of the National Museum. It was decided that the most accurate way to present the styles of the various times was to place on exhibition the actual gown worn by the wives of the various Presidents during that particular period.

The idea was greeted enthusiastically by the government authorities, but it was feared that, although the exhibition would meet with great public interest, the labor required to make a representative exhibition would be unending.

Undaunted, Mrs. James, with the authority of the museum, set about the work of tracing the original gowns. It was decided that to display the original, rather than copies, would be far more effective. She first carefully studied the history of the "first ladies" to select those administrations which indicated the greatest change in fashions.

Then she began the terrific undertaking of tracing the gowns through generation after generation of descendants. In some instances the gowns worn at great state functions were willed by the wearer to some friend or relative. In other cases the gowns were simply disposed of after death to become the property of persons entirely unknown to the Presidents' wives who had worn them.

The country was scoured from end to end for traces of the existing costumes. Gowns of many of the White House ladies have entirely disappeared without leaving a single trace as to what became of them. Mrs. James suffered many disappointments in her task of assembling the costumes for the exhibition and in the course of searching for some wonderful creation that had graced the form of a White House dame would find in many instances that historic gowns had been ruthlessly cut and slashed by the descendants of the original wearers and the material used to fashion latter-day costumes or for fancy work.

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Again, many of the priceless gowns have been destroyed because of the carelessness or ignorance of their owners. They were packed away in half-rotten chests in damp attics and left there for years without attention to become the prey of mice and moths. One gown of extreme fame at the time when its wearer was mistress of the White House was traced to its present owner through half a dozen generations.

It was refused by the owner because it was in tatters and rags. The owner said she would be ashamed to have placed on exhibition such a valuable heirloom which had been so badly cared for by former generations of the family.

A Jefferson gown was promised to Mrs. James by a descendant of that great democratic President. After much correspondence the descendant wrote to say: "I suspect all of the trunks were pretty well rumaged during the war and all of the serviceable silks made over and worn out by the Confederate belles, for necessity knows no law."

Great glass cases arranged on both sides of the room will contain the exhibit. But seven of the twelve figures to comprise the exhibition have been completed. These are Martha Washington, Mrs. Dolly Madison, Mrs. James K. Polk, Mrs. John Tyler, Mrs. Harriet Lane Johnston, Mrs. Ulysses Grant and Mrs. Taft.

H. B. Hendley, a sculptor for the National Museum, modeled the six figures on which the gowns are shown. He made no attempt to secure facial likenesses of the former great ladies. A long study of the coiffures of the various periods was made, however, so that as for gown and hair dressing the models are in complete harmony. The heads are very attractive and enough unlike one another to make them interesting.

The sculptor had nearly as many difficulties to overcome as did Mrs. James, who gathered the gowns. Each model, in order effectively to display the dress, had to be of proper dimensions. The gowns were made to fit perfectly the White House ladies. The models were made to fit the gowns perfectly. As it happened, most of the "first ladies" were nearly all of about the same stature and weight. This facilitated matters somewhat.

It was first thought that coiffures to represent the headdress of the times should be made from real hair. But it was decided that if molded by a sculptor they would be more lasting.

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In each instance an effort has been made to indicate some peculiarity of the woman represented by the figure. The artist sought to get action and life into his models and every figure is characteristic of the woman who wore the gown that now drapes the model. Some article or articles indicative of the time when the woman lived in the White House is placed in each case. It may be a chair, table or perhaps nothing more than a book. In the case containing the model showing one of Mrs. Taft's gowns there is a program of one of the Tafts' famous musicals upon the floor.

As one enters the room he sees first the charming figure of Mistress Dolly Madison—the famous woman of democracy. Dorothea Paine Madison is attired in her favorite gown of buff-colored satin, which is draped over a white skirt elaborately embroidered in all colors of the rainbow. Her right hand is extended, holding an old book written even before her reign at the White House, in cordial greeting to some guest.

It was Dolly Madison who banished from the White House highly pompous and ceremonious manner of conducting social intercourse. The grave dignity assumed by the ladies since Mrs. Washington was far too serious to suit the gay-hearted Mrs. Madison.

Mrs. Madison invariably carried a book in her right hand when she entered a room to greet a visitor. She was not a devotee of literature; in fact, she disliked reading. It was far too slow for the lively "first lady." She never knew more about the book than two or three lines that would be underscored for her by her social secretary, and one or two other facts, jotted down on the flyleaf, to warrant a few remarks on the book if other conversation failed. She often said, later in life, that this omnipresent book saved her many embarrassing situations. The gown has been well cared for, and is a most cherished possession.

Opposite the model of the fair Dolly Madison stands the model of Mrs. Grant, dignified and stately and costumed in the formal, magnificent fashion in vogue in the years just following the war. It is generally admitted that Mrs. Grant's dresses were the models of the time. Some historians declare that her dresses were the most gorgeous and most beautiful that have ever graced either the receiving line or the huge lists of guests at the White House. The gown worn by the Grant model was fitted from pieces of Mrs. Grant's gowns gathered from far and wide.

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It is the most imposing costume of the exhibition. It consists of a heavy brocade, over which is draped a point lace which falls in graceful folds from the shoulders. The lace, loaned to the museum by Mrs. Grant's daughter, is believed to be the same which the famous general's wife wore at the inaugural ball in honor of her husband. The model represents Mrs. Grant standing in a corner of her drawing room apparently smiling at and slightly looking to approaching guests.

Seated in one of the original Mount Vernon chairs, by the side of a table used by Gen. Washington, is a model of Martha Washington. She is holding a workbag which she made during her declining years. On the table are numerous household appointments, also from Mount Vernon, a Society of the Cincinnati tea cup, a saucer, decanter and wine glass, a Lowerstoff bowl filled with yellow roses and mignonette, all of which are standing on a silver waiter taken from the silver service at Mount Vernon.

Mrs. Washington's gown is a heavy salmon-tint silk, painted in a set design, the colors of green and brown predominating. On the floor of the case is a receipted dressmaker's bill which reads: Philadelphia, July the 11, 1792. Maddam Washington: To F. Serre. To making silk habbit, £12; to making a pair of stays, £2; to mending a pair of stays, £1. Total, £15. Received payment in full. Serre.

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Mrs. Sarah Childress Polk, wife of President James K. Polk, entertained most serious views of life. She was puritanical to the highest degree. During her administration of the social affairs of the White House dancing was never permitted and wine was entirely prohibited. In the matter of fine clothes, however, she was extremely partial and she was quite as fond of gorgeous gowns as was the gay-hearted Mrs. Madison. The gown shown in the exhibition, worn at the Polk inaugural ball, is of blue brocade.

Mrs. George W. Fall, adopted daughter of Mrs. Polk, who loaned the gown to the museum, wrote from her home in Nashville, Tenn., that the family records show some very interesting things about Mrs. Polk's fondness for fine clothes. When Mrs. Polk came to Washington with her husband for the inauguration she wore a black velvet coat bordered with a fringe and tassels and a purple silk velvet hat trimmed with broad reddish purple stripes.

Two White House brides furnished abundant material for models. One is

THINGS EVERY BOY KNOWS

THERE'S a freemasonry of boyhood that extends from Maine to Oregon and from Michigan to Texas. Nobody passes the signs along, but the young Floridan and the Iowa youngster have the same superstitions, the same line of hunches and the same good omens as the boys in Utah and New Jersey.

Every boy knows that a snake, mortally wounded at any hour of the day, will not die until the sun sets. That rule has been proved by unlucky reptiles from the lakes to the gulf.

Another bit of snake lore that the boys all know is that a hair from a horse's tail dropped into a pool of water will, if given time, develop into a horsehair snake, wriggly and mysterious.

Mulberries left in water will also develop reptilian tendencies, as boys from time far past have known.

A turtle will never let go until it hears the rattling of thunder, though it is possible to fool the tenacious "bird" with a good heavy club and an empty barrel. If you cut off a turtle's head it will toddle, headless, an exact measured mile before it wabbles over and dies. That bit of information has been the execution writ for thousands of turtles all over the United States. For a novice it might be difficult to induce the turtle to obtrude its head from the shell long enough for the execution, but with a certain magic jumble of words recited in its presence the turtle will at once respond to the cue and hasten the execution.

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The subject of luck makes all boys akin. If a horseshoe is found in the road the finder has but to pick it up, make a wish, expectorate lustily upon the horseshoe, hurl it backward over his head and walk away whistling a certain tune. If he keeps on going, without looking back, the wish will be realized.

If a horseshoe is not available, a perfectly round stone treated in the same way will produce similar results. That rule will work on all subjects but one, and that is a wish that the schoolhouse will burn down. All sorts of tricks of black magic have been tried without avail in that case.

If one sees a load of hay and makes a wish while it is passing along the road that wish will come true.

The first star at night is also a fulfiller of wishes if the wish is prefaced with this formula:

Star bright, star light, first star I've seen tonight,
I wish I may; I wish I might—
Have this wish come true tonight.

Every gray horse one sees is an omen of good luck if proper recognition is made. One must wet the tip of the forefinger, touch the palm of the hand and then hit the palm vigorously with the clenched hand. Count each gray horse this way until ninety-nine have been noted. Upon seeing the hundredth something of value may at once be found. In this game a gray mule counts ten votes.

It is bad luck to kill a frog. Such an act affects the milk of the cow supplying the family of the youngster killing the frog and thus serves to convict the culprit at the dinner table.

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If one will catch a butterfly and bite off its head the biter will receive a suit of clothes the exact shade and coloring of the butterfly's wings. Boys do not care for the motley colors represented by some butterflies, but little girls sometimes secure fine, new dresses by taking advantage of the same rule.

In order to catch a good string of fish in Virginia or Vermont, or anywhere else for that matter, it is only necessary to bait the hook with a nice, wriggly angleworm; make a wish and expectorate on the unfortunate bait and place the line in the water. Fish will respond almost immediately.

Snake feeders (dragon flies) along streams or in marshes indicate to all boys the imminence of snakes. All boys take warning upon seeing this insect and give the snake which it is attending a wide berth. Nobody has ever seen a snake feeder arranging the snake's lunch, but it is known to be positively true that the insect is the snake's chef.

All boys know that it is dangerous to go swimming during dog days, but the period of dog days may be narrowed to suit the natatorial convenience of the individual. In other words the dog days rule may be suspended by a vote of a good-sized crowd of youngsters unable to resist the purling lure of the stream.

The danger from snakes and turtles while swimming does not deter youngsters, for it is a well known fact that a snake cannot bite under water, for the simple reason that the minute it opens its mouth to nab the unsuspecting swimmer it chokes. The same rule applies to turtles.

Another bit of swimming lore is the remedy of boyhood for water in the ears. A flat sun-warmed stone will draw all water right out of the ear of the boy who seeks relief.

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The universal knowledge of boys extends well into the field of materia medica. A bee sting or an insect's bite may be instantaneously cured by placing the mingled juices of three weeds—any three—upon the discomforted portion of the anatomy. Ordinary cobweb is generally known to be a means of stopping the flow of blood when the jackknife goes wrong.

If one has a tooth pulled and will refrain from putting one's tongue in the cavernous vacancy, a new tooth, fully crowned in resplendent gold, will grow there.

The guild of boyhood also promulgates certain rules calculated to protect the brethren from their foes.

It is a known fact that if one calmly faces the onrushing ram, the ferocious bull or even the belligerent bulldog the animal thus frowned upon will be awed by the bravery manifested and will refrain from the intended attack. A good pair of legs and the nimble knack of climbing a tree or scaling a friendly fence will also serve to save the day in such cases.

A mad dog will not molest one who stands idly at the roadside and looks idly about. And if you ever happen to get caught by a bear the thing to do is to fall over, lie perfectly still and hold your breath. The bear will think you're dead, anyway, so what object could he have in killing you?

Granted.

HOWARD ELLIOTT, president of the New Haven lines, said of a certain financier at a dinner in New York:

"There's one thing we must grant him in a business deal; he never splits hairs."

With a wink and a smile Mr. Elliott added:

"He takes your whole scalp."